

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief John R. Batiste



Captain Jeff DeVere
Government and Media Relations
(360) 753-5299 – office
(360) 753-5469 – fax
<http://www.wsp.wa.gov>

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Contact: Lieutenant Marc Lamoreaux or Detective Rachel Edwards
Investigative Assistance Division

Phone: (360) 753-0315, ext. 102

“Task Force Makes Arrest in Traveler Internet Case”

Detectives with the Washington State Patrol Missing and Exploited Children Task Force (MECTF), working in collaboration with the Port of Seattle Police Department, arrested a 24-year old Burlington man at the SeaTac Airport for attempted rape of a child during a sting operation during the evening of Tuesday, July 26, 2005. Detectives are continuing their investigation and additional criminal charges may occur.

It is alleged that the suspect had been communicating with a real 15-year old victim over the Internet for immoral purposes. After law enforcement learned of the alleged criminal activity, an undercover detective with the Wisconsin Department of Justice assumed the identity of the 15-year old victim and had additional on-line conversations with the suspect. It is further alleged the suspect, knowing fully that he was supposedly talking with a minor over the Internet, made several sexually explicit comments. It is also alleged the suspect made arrangements to pick up the victim at SeaTac airport on July 26, 2005, at 7:35 p.m. at the exit to baggage claim for Frontier Airlines on the lower drive. The suspect was taken into custody at the airport without incident.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the center's Cyber-Tip Line last year received 2,605 complaints about online sexual predators, a 23 percent jump from the previous year. Moreover, according to the National Center two-thirds of offenders who commit any type of Internet sex crimes against minors also possess child pornography.

Online predators rely on stealth while prowling cyberspace in anonymity, surfing discussion boards and teen forums. Once they've established contact either through messaging or e-mail, predators work at different rates, some gradually introducing sex in conversation, while others move in quickly.

“Despite the swelling ranks of online predators, we are doing a better job of catching them. These types of crimes are horrific and unfortunately all too common with the onset of the computer age,” said Captain Mark E. Couey.

The following are safety tips to protect children from online predators:

- Make sure kids use computers in a common area, rather than in their bedroom, so you can supervise them online.
- Do not allow kids to establish online profiles. This will keep them from being listed in directories and make it less likely they will be approached in chat rooms by online predators.
- Block instant messages from unknown people.
- Monitor how much time and when kids go to the Internet. Too much online time may be a red flag.
- Use filtering and blocking software.

(more)

The Missing and Exploited Children Task Force is a multi-agency task force that currently includes detectives from the Washington State Patrol, Centralia Police Department, and Port Orchard Police Department. For more information on missing and exploited children you can go to the Washington State Patrol website at www.wsp.wa.gov/missing or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at www.missingkids.org.

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